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# Royalty does it up right

## Edmonton can't get enough of Prince Edward and wife Sophie

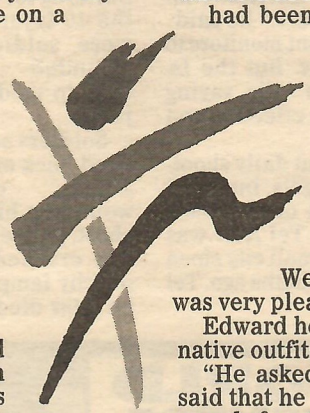
By PAUL COWAN
Staff Writer

Prince Edward and his wife Sophie proved to be real crowd-pleasers yesterday when they hit Churchill Square on a royal walkabout during their last of four days in Edmonton.

Some of the several hundred who swarmed the downtown park even managed to double-dip on royal exposure.

As the royal couple moved along a corridor created by security through the crowd of about 800 people outside City Hall to the square, the prince worked the crowd on the west while Sophie took the east.

Sylvia Chechovich, 67, and Sheila Perry, both originally from England, managed a few words with the prince – then fought their way through the crowds to the other side of the corridor to meet Sophie.



"She told us she felt the visit to Edmonton had been too short and asked us if we'd come here on holiday and forgotten to go back to England," said Perry.

Sylvia said she'd gone down to the square especially to see the royals. "They're part of our heritage," she said.

Hank Frugte, 50, described Sophie, countess of Wessex, as a nice lady. "She was very pleasant and very open."

Edward honed in on a group in bright native outfits.

"He asked where we were from and said that he was pleased to see we were proud of our heritage," said Andy Quintal, who was one of the dancers at the opening ceremonies Friday night for the Worlds.

Sharon Harvey, 52, came to Churchill Square especially to see the royal couple.

"I've followed the royals since before he (Edward) was born but this is the first time I've met any of them," she said. "(Sophie) was very engaging; very attentive."

At City Hall the couple signed a guest book and were presented with a Joe Haire painting of a winter scene by Mayor Bill Smith.

"Since your visit to Edmonton was confirmed our city has been buzzing with excitement," Smith told the couple.

"You have added to the championships with your presence and you have been part of making these games the most successful ever held." Smith also paid a personal tribute to the royals.

"I have had the honour of having dinner with the royals twice. It was the best, most exciting, biggest honour I've had in my six years of being mayor."

The prince praised Edmontonians for such a warm welcome for visiting athletes.

"And the weather you have turned on has been tremendous – you must have worked hard at that as well," he quipped.

The couple were presented with a bouquet of flowers by Smith's mother, 98-year-old Elizabeth Smith, when they arrived at City Hall.

The official part of the visit ended with a trip on a steam train at Fort Edmonton Park, followed by a stroll through the historic streets to Blatchford Hangar, where championships' organizers hosted a dinner for around 800 people.

Dress was informal, with both royals outfitted in jeans. Guests at the dinner included Premier Ralph Klein, Lieut.-Gov. Lois Hole and organizing committee chairman Jack Agrios.

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